

Whalen. "In front of that scrap? I guess not! Can you turn around in this sand, Bill? Lord! Look! Look!"

The first pursuer gained on the fugitive. He was reloading his revolver as he passed from sight behind a little ridge. The outlaw answered to meet him. The pursuer flashed into the open, still loading his gun; the outlaw closed in, shooting. He fired once—twice—three times; the luckless cowboy clutched at the saddle horn, fell over along the horse's neck, hung for a second and rolled off in the deep sand.

Yells of wild rage, a popping of guns filled the air. Unheeding, the assassin rode close to the body and deliberately fired again—once—twice. Bullets puffed the sand about him, but he swooped down from his saddle, came up with the gun of his fallen foe, turned and thundered across to the car. He leaped off, he scrambled toward the car, gun in hand.

"Hit her up!" he commanded, jumping in. "Give her all you got!" The car leaped forward. "Climb over in front, you little fellow!"

The outlaw prodded Bill with a gun muzzle. "You'll have us in the ditch! Sit up, you, or I'll blow you to Kingdom Come!"

For Bill was trying to duck. Mr. Dwyer was scrunched on the floor in front. Mr. Whalen, in the tonneau, was trying to squeeze himself between two suit cases.

Thus admonished, Bill sat up. On the smooth road beyond the draw the car gathered speed and shot ahead with a roar; the shots and shouts grew fainter.

As the fleeing car topped the first rise, the avengers, with one accord, jogged soberly back in little groups of twos and threes.

Even more remarkable was the conduct of the murdered man. He brushed himself, rubbed the sand from his hair, took up his sombrero, mounted his horse, captured the loose horse left by his late assassin and led him to camp. The horse wrangler rode out to meet him.

"Spud Wallis, you red heilion," said the horse-wrangler, "them fellows'll be at the North Pole by sundown."

IN the kidnapped car conversation languished.

"Pull her up, son," advised the new passenger. "We've made our get-away. Just let her trundle along. There, that's better."

He was a powerful bulk of a man, great of body and bone; he filled the eye. In his left hand he held his enormous high-peaked Mexican sombrero of thick red felt, heavily braided with silver; the other hand, carelessly holding the six-shooter, rested easily on his thigh. A massive head sat on a bull-neck. His features were heavy but not ill-shaped; his mouth was tensed to a grim straight line; his mustache was black and long; his eyes were black and hard, his brows heavy and black, the thick tangle of hair jet-black; his great red-brown face was streaked with sweat and dust.

He turned his attention to Mr. Robert Whalen. "What's the matter, brother? Got a chill?"

Mr. Whalen picked up spirit. "Great Christopher K. Columbus!" he answered. "I'm scared!"

"Chauffeur Bill flung a remark over his shoulder. "Well, you needn't put on any high-and-mighty airs about it—so am I!"

The robber laughed. "I really ought to shake you fellows down for your change," he said apologetically, "but I haven't the heart to do it, the way the play come. You done me a good turn, and I'm grateful. You just carry me along till I get a horse and we'll call it square. But if you got any guns you'd better dump 'em overboard. Gans made me nervous."

"Shrimp's got one," said Bill. "Toss it out, Shrimp, as the gentleman tells you."

Mr. Dwyer produced a dainty affair in silver and pearl.

The outlaw gave a cry of delight. "Oh, what a cunning little thing!" he cooed. "Don't throw it away, Mr. Shrimp. I'll sew it on my hat. No—I'll use it for a scarf pin." He thrust his own gun in the holster and put the new one in his pocket. "Now we'll go long, all nice and cosy," he said.

The Point of Rocks lay far behind; the railroad was close to the left. In the north, Lear-section house, water tank and telegraph shack—grew large against the sky. They crossed the railroad track and plowed through a stretch of sand.

"HANDS up! Stop here!"

Ten feet away a rifle barrel poked from behind a washed out bank. It was pointed at Bill, but in a half second it swung to cover the tonneau. "If it ain't Bill Panky! Don't move a hand!"

To steady himself in crossing the gully, Mr. Panky's hands had gripped at seat and stanchion. He now rigidly held that strained position. The car stopped astride the ditch.

A man stepped cautiously from the washout—a little man with a long 30-40 repeater. He looked very much indeed like Mr. Charlie Simpson. He held the muzzle of the long rifle with a foot of Mr. Panky's ribs.

"Put your hands on the back of the

front seat!" he ordered. "Shut your eyes!"

Mr. Panky did this. The little man reached forward gingerly for Mr. Panky's six-shooter. Getting it, with a little audible sob of relief, he cocked it, backed off a step, and laid the rifle behind him.

"Get out!" he said. "Keep them hands up! Turn around. Back out!"

Panky meekly submitted while the little man frisked him for weapons.

"What—in—hell—is—this?" said the little man, in a rising crescendo of astonishment, when he came to the little pearl-handled gun. "Turn around, Bill, let's have a look at you!"

"Why, it's old Hank!" said Mr. Panky.

"Yes—it's old Hank." The little man sat down on the bank. He had a wizened, freckled face and a stubby red mustache, which now bristled to a snarl. "Old Hank—him you bullied and run over, and cheated out of his

"Back out that car, you feller, and turn her round." He reached back for the rifle.

"You can't do that Sim—simperton," said Panky. "They'll send you to the pen for that Lordsburg job."

"They'll let me off light, me givin' myself up and bringing you in," asserted Hank confidently. "They want you, Bill. You'll swing for that conductor you got. They'll give me two or three years at most—maybe a full pardon. And you'll be hung till you're dead—dead—dead!"

"I'll give you all the money I got cached, Hank."

"You'll give me a shot in the back. To hell with your money!"

Panky wilted. He was trembling. He cried. "Take me to Grindstone, then, Hank," he pleaded abjectly. "The Tumble-Tee outfit will lynch me if you take me back that way. I—I killed a man down there this afternoon, Hank."



ONE PLUNGE—TWO—AT THE THIRD, HORSE AND MAN WENT OVER THE THIRTY-FOOT BANK INTO THE RIO GRANDE.

share on that Lordsburg money. Well, well! What a joyful surprise! I see this ortemobile a-coming, and thinks I'll just pick up a little piece of money—and here I got the drop on old Bill Panky, and 10,000 perfectly good dollars reward for him, alive or dead. I hope this will always be a lesson to us."

Mr. Panky laughed uneasily. "You wouldn't do old Bill dirt like that, old fellow."

"Yes, I would," said Hank, positively.

"I got a big bunch of money hid out, Hank—I'll whack up even with you—honest I will."

"No, you won't. You want a chance to put me to bed with a shovel—that's what you want. Here's where I get even with you, for keeps. I'm getting old, Bill—and that ten thousand will sorter ease my declinin' years."

"Maybe I was too rough on you," admitted Mr. Panky. "But I'll make it up to you. You keep the guns, Hank—take what dough this bunch has, if you want it—we'll get some horses and hit the brush for my hide-out."

"You'll hit the back track for Dona Ana," retorted Hank, ferociously.

"You did? Is that right, you fellows?" Hank asked.

"He did," said Whalen. "Cold-blooded. Shot him twice after he was down. We saw it. Then he made us bring him up here. Don't you be afraid of us. We're with you—we take you in the machine wherever you want to go."

Hank surveyed the prisoner with ferocious joy. "That settles you. I get the reward just the same—alive or dead. And what's more, if you open your ugly head for just one more word, I'll kill you right now and here. I mean it." His fingers twitched along the rifle barrel.

BY the car, the three partners had been holding a whispered conference. Now Dwyer came forward. He was very pale, but the light of greed was in his blinking eyes.

"Wait—wait a minute," he faltered.

"We want to make you a proposition. We happen to have with us a considerable sum in ready cash. You couldn't very well rob us on your way to tell the court you wanted to reform. But why should you go to the penitentiary? Why wouldn't you have

us pay you a good cash percentage right here, and let us have the reward, while you go free?"

"They might send you up for a long term, you know. You never can tell," urged Whalen. "Why you might get sick and die there."

"How much?" Hank did not move his little glowing eyes from his captive. "I never did care much for the penitentiary, anyhow."

Chauffeur Bill became the spokesman.

"Fifteen hundred dollars."

"That listens pretty good. Come again. You hadn't ought to try to hold out on an old man that way," said Hank sorrowfully. "I got the guns. Try once more."

"We can scrape up a little more, between us," admitted Dwyer, reluctantly. "But it will leave us bare. We need some expense money."

"You give it here," returned Hank implacably. "Expense money be blowed! Give me two thousand even, and it's a go. But you got to go back the way you came. I'm goin' north—and I need room. The boys won't lynch him—not with you bringin' him in that way. They'll take him to Dona Ana for you. That's my last word. Take it or leave it."

The money changed hands. Under Hank's gun, Panky was trussed up with suit-case straps, his hands behind his back, and was assisted into the car. Then his ankles were strapped together. Whalen took the steering wheel with Dwyer beside him and the two Bills in the tonneau. The car turned back toward the Point of Rocks; behind it, Hank climbed to the railroad track and howled a truculent farewell.

Mr. Panky chatted freely, mainly about Hank. His companions, being in high spirits, met these lively sallies with laughter and applause. After a few miles, however, Mr. Panky lapsed to sullen silence.

A COOL breeze tossed the wayside mesquites; a fair mountain notched black and sharp across the red sun, the car came again to Lookout Draw. It chugged up the sandy slope, it turned across the plain to the chuck-wagon.

A horseman trotted out to meet the car, waving his arm. "Gee whiz! Ain't you got no sense?" he cried in an angry voice. "Get away with that devil-wagon. You'll stampede these cattle. Go 'way round, if you want to get to camp."

Whalen made a wide detour, driving slowly over the grass hummocks; dusk had fallen when he reached the wagon.

By the bright fire stood a battery of steaming Dutch ovens and pots and a vast kettle of coffee, sending out a savory incense; in the freelight, a broad, semi-circle of cowboys sat cross-legged, laughing and talking or busy with plate and knife and fork.

"Supper all ready, strangers! Come and get it!"

The hail came from Cole, the foreman, as the car stopped.

"We've got your train robber!" called Whalen triumphantly. "Here's your Bill Panky."

The semi-circle went suddenly hushed and still.

Cole rose and came forward. "Bully!" he said heartily. "Good for you! There's a big reward offered for him—ten thousand, I think. You're in luck. Where'd you get him?"

"Another man captured him," explained Whalen, modestly, "and turned him over to us to bring in." He tugged at the strap on the captive's legs. "I'll tell you about it later."

He took the prisoner's elbow, Bill assisting from behind, and helped him to the ground. Dwyer followed.

"Gosh, my feet are asleep," remarked the prisoner, to a vast silence. He shambled a step into the freelight. "Undo my arms, somebody."

Cole unbuckled the strap; the outlaw hobbled straight to a tin plate and cup. Cole spoke in a pained and shocked voice.

"Why, this isn't Bill Panky. This is old Jim Hendricks, and he isn't worth \$20 a dozen to any one."

"But he killed a man here!" Cole shook his head. "We was just playing moving-picture cowboys."

Whalen's heart stood still. Dwyer felt a cold faintness creeping over him and leaned heavily against the mud-guard. "But our m-money!" gurgled Dwyer. "All we had—gave it to the man that caught him!"

A drawing voice rose from the fire. "What sort of a looking man? Little sawed-off runt, red eyes and brindled mustache?"

"That's him!"

"Oh, it's all right then!" said the voice. "I told him to do that." Spud Wallis, the speaker, rose and loitered over. "I'll take care of the money. You just make a little list of the rings you've lost lately, Mr. Whalen—your poor old dad's rings. Jot down the names and amounts, near as you remember, and I'll fix it all up for as far as the money holds out."

Bill stepped into the car and grasped the steering-wheel firmly. "Home, Jeez!" he said.

And thus Spud got the girl!

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